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Active Kids Healthy Kids

A Nova Scotia Physical Activity Strategy
for Children and Youth

Fall 2002

Based on the report submitted by the Working Group on Physical Activity for Children and Youth

Funded and supported by Nova Scotia Sport and Recreation Commission
Nova Scotia Department of Health, Public Health Services
Nova Scotia Department of Education, English Program Services

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More information on the Active Kids, Healthy Kids initiative, including research, background information, and reports, can be found on the Nova Scotia Sport and Recreation website at <http://www.gov.ns.ca/src/initiatives_pacy.htm>.

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Rationale

The Nova Scotia Physical Activity Strategy for Strategy for Children and Youth (now called Active Kids, Healthy Kids) was created by a working group of government and non-government organizations on behalf of the Minister responsible for the Sport and Recreation Commission. The three-year strategy, from 2002-03 to 2004-05, is supported and funded by the Sport and Recreation Commission; the Department of Health, Public Health Services; and the Department of Education, English Program Services.

This provincial strategy had wide input from a multitude of stakeholders and youth at community, regional, and provincial levels through more than 40 consultation sessions. The proceedings of the consultations are available on the Sport and Recreation website at <www.gov.ns.ca/src>.

Inactivity among children and youth is becoming an epidemic in Canada, and Nova Scotia is no exception. The following chart reports the percentage of students who accumulated the Nova Scotia recommendation of 60 minutes or more of moderate or vigorous physical activity each day:

200-02	Grade 3	Grade 7	Grade 11
Male	90 %	45%	8.7%
Female	92.3%	28%	5.1%

Note: Full study available at <www.gov.ns.ca/src> under Active Kids Healthy Kids/Strategy.

- Only 15 per cent of Nova Scotia high school students take physical education.
- Only 25 per cent of Nova Scotian student aged 5-17 years walk or bike to school every day.
- The average Canadian child is sedentary for three to five hours every day.

According to Health Canada and Canadian Society for Exercise Physiology (see website www.healthcanada.ca/paguide), regular activity

- builds strong bones and strengthens muscles
- maintains flexibility
- achieves a healthy weight
- promotes good posture and balance
- improves fitness
- provides opportunities to meet new friends
- strengthens the heart
- improves physical self-esteem
- increases relaxation
- enhances healthy growth and development

Vision

In the year 2010, Nova Scotia is known as a province that experienced a fundamental shift in its support for active, healthy lifestyles for children and youth. Nova Scotia is a province where a culture of physical activity for young people flourishes. It is a culture in which children, youth, and their families have rediscovered and renewed the joy and fun that comes from being physically active every day. Physical activity is an important part of the daily lives of children and youth of this province. Communities, schools, and workplaces welcome and support a physically active lifestyle.

Purpose

The long-term goal of the Active Kids, Healthy Kids strategy is to increase the number of children and youth who accumulate at least 60 minutes of moderate- or higher-intensity physical activity on a daily basis.

Strategy Principles

The principles of the Active Kids, Healthy Kids strategy should be reflected in all components. The principles are

- Children have the right to a variety of structured and unstructured opportunities to participate in physical activity and play.
- Quality leadership among service providers is essential to physical activity opportunities that maximize healthy child development.
- Fair and safe play will be an integral part of structured opportunities for children and youth.
- Helping inactive children and youth become more active will be a priority.
- Daily activities at home, in schools, and in communities will be the focus of the strategy.
- Identifying and building on what is currently offered by existing groups, organizations, and institutions in the community.
- Initiatives will be based on evidence and best practices. A mix of policy, environmental changes, and program opportunities is effective.
- Children and youth will be listened to and involved in leadership.
- Collaborative effort among agencies, government, and non government organizations is a proven method for achieving results.
- Government commitment is necessary to create and sustain opportunities for healthy physical activity through policy, planning, and standards.

These principles will be used to evaluate and provide feedback on the proposed plans.

The Six Components of the Strategy

The provincial strategy has six components designed to complement each other.

1. ***Policy and Program Development***

   To initiate and coordinate government leadership and planning to implement the Active Kids, Healthy Kids strategy.

2. ***Active Communities***

   To mobilize and build the capacity of families, schools, local government, and community organizations to increase the number of children and youth who are active enough for health benefits.

3. ***Active School Communities***

   To increase physical and social environments that support active, healthy lifestyles among children and youth through collaboration among teachers, students, parents, administrators, and community leaders in sport and recreation, health, and other interested sectors.

4. ***Active Community Environments***

   To create safe and accessible physical environments that will encourage young people to increase active modes of transportation, such as walking and cycling.

5. ***Public Education***

   To educate and motivate children, youth, and their families to increase their levels of physical activity.

6. ***Evaluation and Monitoring***

   To evaluate the impact of the various components of the strategy on the physical activity levels of children and youth in Nova Scotia.

1. Policy and Program Development

Goal: ***To initiate and coordinate government leadership and planning to implement the Active Kids, Healthy Kids strategy***

Activities

1. Inform and involve other provincial government departments and agencies about the strategy and its implications.
2. Advocate and support a comprehensive Department of Education policy on community access to schools that will increase opportunities for physical activity.
3. Implement the Department of Education's Time to Learn Strategy recommendations pertaining to instructional time for physical education for students in grade primary to grade 9.
4. Encourage and work with the Department of Community Services on measures to increase appropriate physical activity in daycare and child-care settings.
5. Coordinate Nova Scotia input on proposed federal/national physical activity policies and initiatives.
6. Manage communication, implementation, and evaluation of the strategy.
7. Provide input on the role of physical activity in the chronic disease prevention strategy being developed by the Unit for Population Health, Dalhousie University and the Department of Health.
8. Identify and disseminate information on evidence-based interventions and best practices.
9. Implement actions to attract additional funding from other stakeholders in government, non-government, and corporate sectors.

2. Active Communities

Goal: ***To mobilize and build the capacity of families, schools, local government, and community organizations to increase the number of children and youth who are active enough for health benefits***

Community capacity is defined as building sustainable skills, resources, and commitments to physical activity through the development of **collaborative efforts** between municipal governments, health organizations, school boards, youth groups, sport and recreation groups, and others.

Activities

1. Coordinate development and implementation of six regional plans on physical activity with participation by partners in recreation, health, education, as well as other interested people and organizations.
2. Provide training to service providers on listening to and including young people in planning and leading programs and services.
3. Assist provincial non-government groups with physical activity initiatives.
4. Encourage post-secondary training programs to include physical activity in their curriculum: e.g., early childhood, medicine, nursing, allied health professionals, teacher education, recreation, kinesiology, nutrition, health education.
5. Sponsor a provincial forum to identify strategies to reduce barriers to participation by people with limited incomes.
6. Identify need for youth fitness or physical activity programs.

3. Active School Communities

Goal: ***To increase physical and social environments that support active, healthy lifestyles among children and youth through collaboration of teachers, students, parents, administrators, and community leaders in sport and recreation, health, and other interested sectors.***

An active school community is one

- in which all citizens, including teachers, students, parents, administrators, and community leaders, work together to create physical and social environments that support active, healthy lifestyles
- that supports policy, environment, and initiatives that encourage physical activity in the home, the school, and the community.

Examples of active school community initiatives include

- after-school programs
- transportation, e.g., Active and Safe Routes to School
- physical environments, e.g., playgrounds
- intramural activities
- supportive curriculum, e.g., physical education
- youth leadership

Activities

1. Implement one three-year pilot project per school board to demonstrate school and community collaboration to increase physical activity. A Mi'kmaw site is under discussion with the board and the Aboriginal Sport and Recreation Circle.

4. Active Community Environments

Goal: ***To create safe and accessible physical environments that encourage young people to increase active modes of transportation, such as walking and cycling.***

Activities

1. Build awareness among municipal planners, engineers, and councillors.
2. Host a symposium on active transportation.
3. Continue trail development initiatives with communities and government departments.
4. Support the Active and Safe Routes to School program.
5. Establish an interdepartmental committee to improve active transportation.

5. Public Education

Goal: ***To educate and motivate children, youth, and their families to increase their levels of physical activity***

Activities

1. Integrate key physical activity messages into existing parent education initiatives.
2. Provide training for health care providers, including doctors, on advising patients about physical activity.
3. Coordinate distribution of Heath Canada/Canadian Society for Exercise Physiology guidelines and resource materials on physical activity for children and youth.
4. Educate sport providers, parents, and children and youth about fair play.
5. Develop a provincial recognition program for contributions to physical activity for children and youth.
6. Provide advice and assistance to proposed Health Canada campaign on active living and nutrition.
7. Coordinate the SummerActive program in partnership with Health Canada.

6. Evaluation and Monitoring

Goal: ***To evaluate the impact of the various components of the strategy and their effect on the physical activity levels of children and youth in Nova Scotia***

Activities

1. Develop and implement an evaluation process for the strategy.
2. Disseminate information on current physical activity levels of Nova Scotia children and youth.
3. Identify and produce specialized reports from the research data that will help service providers select target groups and interventions.
4. Prepare proposal for 2006 study on the physical activity levels of Nova Scotia children and youth.